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State Superintendent of Public Instruction



November 15, 2000

To: County and District Superintendents
California Youth Authority Director

From: Mary Tobias Weaver, Assistant Superintendent/Director
Educational Support Systems Division

Subject: **Alternative Accountability System: School Identification for the Alternative Schools Accountability Model**

As you may know, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved in concept, at its July 2000 meeting,¹ an Alternative Accountability System that includes an Alternative Schools Accountability Model² for California schools that serve a majority of high-risk students. Schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model are schools serving a majority of students who are:

- classified as being at high risk for behavioral or educational failure,³
- expelled or under disciplinary sanction,
- wards of the court,
- pregnant and/or parenting, and/or
- recovered dropouts.

In addition, very small schools with fewer than 11 valid Stanford 9 test scores will be held accountable through the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.

The California Department of Education (CDE) requests your assistance in formally identifying schools in your district for inclusion in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model if they meet the criteria adopted by the SBE. Enclosed with this letter are forms for schools that may be most appropriately held accountable in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model based on their school ownership codes.⁴ (Note that some districts may not have pre-printed forms included because no schools for high-risk students were identified by the school ownership codes.)

¹ The SBE adopted the *Report of the Advisory Committee of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA): Summary of Issues and Recommendations for the Development and Implementation of an Alternative Accountability System*. This report is available at <<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/board/july00/drftpsaatosbe.htm>>

² The Alternative Accountability System includes two other models – see Attachment A.

³ High risk for behavioral or educational failure refers to the characteristics of students served by Continuation Schools, Opportunity Schools, Community Day Schools, and County Court and Community Schools as distinguished from students served by low-performing schools.

⁴ A school ownership code designating school type is assigned to each school when it applies for a County-District-School (CDS) code, based on information provided by the district on the CDS code application.

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In order to meet the timelines of the main accountability system, CDE must receive your response(s) on the enclosed “Alternative Schools Accountability Model Designation” form(s) by December 4, 2000. If we do not receive the forms by that time, the California Department of Education (CDE) will assign these school(s) to either the main API Accountability System (including the small school API) or the Alternative Accountability Schools Model. Assignment will be based on the school ownership code that appears at the top of each form, as explained below.

Background

In January 2000, CDE began a new era in educational accountability with the release of the *Academic Performance Index (API) Reports* for schools. These reports were mandated by the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999. All traditional and charter schools with at least 100 valid Stanford 9 test scores were included in this main API Accountability System and received 1999 APIs along with 1999 API Reports. Additional background information including the timeline for implementation is provided in Attachment A, “Synopsis of Information from the July 2000 Report on the Development and Implementation of the Alternative Accountability System.”

Charter schools in existence during the 1999-2000 school year have already received a letter dated August 25, 2000, which gave them this same opportunity to formally request inclusion in the Alternative Accountability Schools Model only if the school serves a majority of high-risk students as defined by the SBE. New charter schools will receive a similar letter this month.

Schools serving traditional student populations with 11 to 99 valid Stanford 9 test results will be held accountable under the “Small Schools Model.” In the Small Schools Model, a small-school API with a special asterisk designation will be provided to acknowledge the greater statistical uncertainty of an API based on fewer than 100 scores. The small-school API will be reported beginning with the 2000-2001 API cycle. As noted above, **very** small schools having fewer than 11 valid Stanford 9 scores will participate in the Alternative Schools Accountability System.

Alternative Schools

Schools that meet the definition of alternative schools as adopted by the SBE may elect to participate in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model whatever their size and number of valid test results. Except for very small schools, if a school meets the SBE’s definition of an alternative school for the purposes of accountability, you may elect to have this school included in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model or you may choose to place it in the main API system. Once a district elects for a school to participate in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model, that school must continue to do so for at least three years. **It is important for you to consider that only schools in the main API Accountability System are currently eligible for the cash awards and the interventions programs.** It is possible that future legislation will provide funding for awards and interventions for schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.

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Attached is an "Alternative Schools Accountability Model Designation" form for each school in your district that has a school ownership code indicating that the school may serve a majority of students in these high-risk populations. These schools were excluded from the main API Accountability System in 1999. When completing the attached form(s), you are encouraged to carefully consider the stated purpose of each school and the characteristics of its student population. Unless the school currently serves a majority of high-risk students in the populations listed, the school will participate in the main API Accountability System or the Small Schools Model, and will receive either an API or a small-school API, depending on the number of valid test scores.

Also attached is a list of schools in your district that had less than 20 valid Stanford 9 test scores in 2000, and that could possibly have fewer than 11 valid scores in 2001. Very small schools with less than 11 valid Stanford 9 test scores in 2001 will be included in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.

Accountability Model Designation

On the enclosed form(s) please indicate your choice for each school to either: (1) receive an API or small-school API with a special asterisk designation, as appropriate; or (2) be held accountable under the Alternative Schools Accountability Model. Please mail or fax the completed form(s), in time to be received by December 4, 2000, to CDE at:

Accountability System – Educational Options Office
California Department of Education
660 J Street, Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

If you fax a copy, please also send the form(s) with original signatures by mail to the above address. (Fax numbers are provided on the form.)

If CDE finds it necessary to assign schools to either the main API Accountability System (or the small-school API, as appropriate) or the Alternative Schools Accountability Model, the assignment decision will be based on the school ownership code at the top of each "Alternative Schools Accountability Model Designation" form (see Attachment B for a list of School Ownership Codes and Their "Default" Assigned Accountability System). Continuation Schools, Opportunity Schools, Community Day Schools, Court and Community Schools, and Youth Authority Schools for which no designation is received will default into the Alternative Schools Accountability Model. We will assign all other "alternative" schools to the main API Accountability system (including the small school API, as appropriate).

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Forms with no school name or code are provided for your use to complete information on schools that are not indentified by ownership codes as schools that should be in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model but are, in fact, serving a majority of high-risk students as defined for this purpose. You may duplicate this form as necessary. Information on these schools will enable us to update the accountability system database for the 2000-2001 school year.

We realize that your timeline for responding to this request is very short, and we appreciate your prompt attention to this important task. Time and care given now in properly identifying schools for participation in the appropriate accountability system will benefit the schools and students involved. If you have questions regarding the main API Accountability System, you may contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (916) 657-2273. Questions regarding the Alternative Accountability System or the form should be addressed to the Educational Options Office at (916) 322-5012.

We look forward to working with you as we bring all students and schools into the public schools accountability system.

MTW:mj
Enclosures

November 15, 2000

To: District Accountability Coordinators

From: Mary Tobias Weaver, Assistant Superintendent/Director
Educational Support Systems Division

Subject: **Alternative Accountability System: School Identification for the Alternative
Schools Accountability Model**

Enclosed is a copy of a letter that has recently been mailed to your superintendent. We are contacting you to ask your assistance in expediting completion of the forms enclosed with the superintendent's letter. As explained in the letter, these forms are for the "alternative" schools in your district with ownership codes indicating that they are likely to serve a majority of high-risk students. The forms are to identify the appropriate accountability system for each of these schools.

We realize that the timeline for responding to this request is very short, and we appreciate your prompt attention to this important task. Time and care given now in properly identifying schools for participation in the appropriate accountability system will benefit the schools and students involved. If you have questions regarding the main API Accountability System, you may contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (916) 657-2273. Questions regarding the Alternative Accountability System or the form should be addressed to the Educational Options Office at (916) 322-5012.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

MTW:mj
Enclosure

Synopsis of Information from the July 2000 Report on the Development and Implementation of an Alternative Accountability System

From the Advisory Committee for the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA)

The Alternative Accountability System includes three models:

Small Schools Model – A small-schools Academic Performance Index (API) will be calculated for schools with 11 to 99 valid test scores. This API will be reported with an asterisk denoting that it is for a small school.

Special Education Centers Model – No additional accountability measures for special education schools and centers will be developed at this time. This model encompasses the current Quality Assurance Process, the annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) review and three-year evaluation process, and developmental work. Recommendations for this model will be based on review of the new alternate assessment and key Performance Indicators that will go to the State Board of Education (SBE) in the fall of 2001.

Alternative Schools Accountability Model – Alternative schools, like all schools, must seek to meet state standards of learning and achievement. The PSAA Advisory Committee finds that the accountability model for alternative schools must directly acknowledge the fact that schools serving a majority of students who are at high risk for behavioral or educational failure, expelled or under disciplinary sanction, wards of the court, pregnant and/or parenting, or recovered dropouts must also meet the challenge of addressing personal and social issues that confront these students and interfere with their abilities to reach grade level standards. Accountability that accurately reflects the growth of students enrolled in alternative schools must be based on multiple indicators of progress reflecting academic performance as well as other aspects of growth. Moreover, it must be based on data for students enrolled for a minimum period required for consistent delivery of instruction and must reflect the progress of those students during the time they were enrolled in the school.

Small schools with ten or fewer valid Stanford 9-test scores must also be included in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.

The accountability model for alternative schools can best be addressed by adopting a multiple-indicator system that requires schools to report STAR test results as well as achievement of goals for growth on additional indicators of readiness for learning, academic achievement, and school completion. Key elements of the model are as follows:

- A list of indicators, including STAR results, approved by the SBE. This list may identify one or more required indicators and also permit selection of a required number of indicators from two or more categories.
- Minimum levels of growth on STAR results and other indicators approved by the SBE.
- Indicators selected locally and approved by local boards to be tracked and reported for three years.
- Selected indicators should be appropriate to the population served.

- Data reported to local boards and CDE by all participating schools.
- Achievement of goals on STAR and on each of the state-approved indicators evaluated by CDE.

Key aspects of timeline for implementation of the Alternative Schools Accountability Model:

Academic Year 2000-01

- July-December 2000 – With field input, the PSAA Advisory Committee develops indicators and growth targets appropriate for measuring student progress for schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.
- January 2001 – SBE approves the proposed indicators and goals for growth.
- March 2001 – Committee develops guidelines for reporting results and providing recognition and intervention for schools in the Alternative Accountability System.
- April-June 2001 – CDE conducts workshops statewide on requirements of the Alternative Accountability Schools Model and provides technical assistance on the indicators.

Academic Year 2001-02

- September 2001 – Schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model select indicators and secure local board approval.
- July 2002 – Schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model report baseline data on STAR and other indicators to local boards and to the SPI.

Academic Year 2002-03

- July 2003 – Schools in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model report data on achievement of growth on STAR and other indicators to local boards and to the SPI.

School Ownership Codes and Their “Default” Assigned Accountability System

OwnershipCode

<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Assigned Accountability System</u>
10	County Community School	Alternative
11	Youth Authority Facility	Alternative
12	Neglected and Delinquent School	Main API
13	Opportunity School	Alternative
14	Juvenile Court School	Alternative
63	Alternative School	Main API
68	Continuation High School	Alternative
69	Community Day School	Alternative

If the “Alternative Schools Accountability Model Designation” form for a given school is not completed and received by the California Department of California by December 4, 2000, the school will be assigned to the accountability system indicated above.

Additional Instructions for County Offices of Education re: Multiple Schools under a Single CDS Code

If your county operates more than one school under a single CDS code, please complete a separate “Alternative Schools Accountability Model Designation” form for each school (use the common CDS number on each form). For example, if your county operates both a county community school and a juvenile court school under a single CDS code, please fill out a separate form for each of these schools. (If your county operates a school at multiple sites, do not fill out a separate form for each site.) Note that you will have another opportunity to complete separate forms for each type of school in September 2001 when you select indicators for schools participating in the Alternative Schools Accountability Model.

Please call the Educational Options Office at (916) 322-5012 with any questions on these additional instructions.